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Dulles To Go

Because of its necessarily clandestine nature the Central Intelligence Agency is obliged to bear one of the most irksome of public-relations crosses: it can never lay claim to its successes, nor yet attempt to explain its failures. So it was that after the collapse last April of the Cuban invasion, evidently a largely CIA-managed affair, the agency had to endure in silence the irate if somewhat confused public reaction which, for lack of a more clear-cut target, tended to concentrate on the role the agency played. Hunters for a scapegoat turned upon Allen W. Dulles, the CIA director, with cries for his head.

Official word from the White House has now confirmed reports that Mr. Dulles is, indeed, to leave, though his successor has not yet been designated. Whether his departure is more of a resignation, as officially stated, or a polite dismissal is not particularly important. Rightly or wrongly he will doubtless be written down in the popular mind as the official in charge when the CIA mismanaged Cuba and hence, conveniently, the man to blame. Our own guess is that blame for that unhappy affair cannot be so simply assigned, that many others throughout the Administration—not excluding the President himself—deserve to share in the bad marks for Cuba. Only the historians are likely to sort the tangle out with any genuine fairness.

The larger question right now is whether President Kennedy can make of the Cuban affair a constructive lesson for the future. Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, his military representative, has carried out a personal survey of the nation's intelligence system and his report, presumably with recommendations, has been made to Mr. Kennedy. Administrative reorganization is likely to follow a replacement for Mr. Dulles. This country has historically paid little attention to the intelligence function, an oversight it can no longer afford. The Cuban failure may yet turn out to have been the eye-opener needed to brace national strategy for the greater challenges ahead.